ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 8

INSIGHT
4 May 1987

Loyalty Lets Its Guard Down

SUMMARY: Spying charges against two Marines stationed at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow bring to the fore qualms about U.S. public virtue. Have values so declined that treason no longer is totally wrong? Has America lost its sense of right and wrong? Maybe, say some cultural observers. They blame the loss of ethical grounding on the Me Decade, situational ethics, even Reaganomics. Whatever the cause, repair will be difficult, and emphasizing ethics classes is unlikely to be enough.

Marine Corps Base, Quantico, Va., 30 miles south of Washington, has long been known as the "crossroads of the Corps." No combat troops are stationed there. Quantico's mission is research, development and education, and most professional Marines can expect to be sent there at least once during their career. The Corps trains its elite there: officers, selected staff noncommissioned officers, specialists in several technical specialties.

And embassy guards.

"Well," says a young Marine corporal, walking along the road from "mainside" to the small air station and happy to accept a ride, "we're not exactly all walking around with our heads down. And we're not exactly spending all day thinking about it. But when we do think about it, it hurts."

"It," of course, is the arrest of three Marine guards at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, the replacement of their detachment and the possibility of more arrests. At the moment, two Marines, Sgt. Clayton J. Lonetree and Cpl. Arnold Bracy, have been charged with spying and face courts-martial. They could be executed.

The government alleges that both men were recruited as spies after sexual encounters with Soviet women, at least one of whom worked in the embassy. The guards may have provided the Soviets with floor plans of the embassy, names of U.S. agents and bags of classified documents. They may also have allowed communist agents access to sensitive areas of the embassy, such as the communications center and the offices of the military attache.

Bracy and Lonetree (left, center) are accused of letting Soviet agents in to tour the Moscow embassy; Stufflebeam is charged with illicit contact with Soviet nationals.

A third Marine, Staff Sgt. Robert S Stufflebeam, has been charged with failun to report contacts with Soviet nationals (al unofficial contacts are prohibited) and may also have had sexual relations with Soviet women. In other, unrelated incidents, Marines at the Leningrad consulate and the embassy in Vienna have fallen under suspicion of similar violations.

A variety of criminal and administrative investigations are under way. All the Marines who served in the Moscow embassy during the 1985-86 period may be asked to take polygraphs. The State Department is investigating what may be the worst embassy espionage disaster in U.S. history and has shown a lively new interest in enforcing regulations governing the conduct of all embassy personnel. A congressional committee has visited Moscow. Les Aspin, the Wisconsin Democrat who chairs the House Armed Services Committee, has expressed outrage at a situation in which "no one seemed to be in charge."

Is there a larger lesson to be drawn from the Marine spy scandal, a lesson about the U.S. military? Charles C. Moskos, author of "The American Enlisted Man" and professor of sociology at Northwestern University, thinks so. "What we're seeing may be the result of the marketplace military, of the all-volunteer concept, of the idea that there is no such thing as obligation."

Moskos praises the individuals serving but notes: "They tend to be anomic, isolated. There's no real institutional center, either in the military or in the country, telling people what's right and wrong, and enforcing it. The anomie — good sociological word, it means rootlessness — is, I think, a necessary condition for things like the Marine incidents, but not sufficient. What I suspect may happen is that the pressures of small cultures tend to override larger values, to the extent that larger values do exist. Embassy duty isn't arduous, but it tends to become a world of its own.

"Apparently, it was a world with rules that overrode the idea that Marines shouldn't let KGB agents into the code room."

The infiltration of the U.S. Embassy in Moscow may be the worst embassy espionage disaster in American history.

Understandably, the security implications of the arrests have dominated media attention. But they also raise a larger, and potentially far more troublesome, issue. They are part of what The New York Times calls "an epidemic of traitors": the Moscow Marines, Jonathan Jay Pollard, the Walker family, Ronald W. Pelton, et al. America has not endured such a wave of treasonous activity since the 1950s.

But many of the 1950s spies could at least claim an ideological motivation, whether devotion to Marxism, "free scientific research" or some other "higher value." Those in the new wave seem in it entirely for themselves. Pelton and the Walkers spied for money and the thrill; the Marines allegedly got involved via sexual encounters.

As former CIA analyst George A. Carver Jr. demonstrated in a recent article for The New Republic, even Pollard, who offered his services to the Israelis out of a misguided pro-Zionist urge to pass on terrorist data, quickly found his handlers less interested in terrorism than in U.S. military secrets and stayed on for the money and the enhancement of his romantic self-image.

The question, then, is: What does this epidemic of traitors say about the United States — its values, its culture, its ability to command the loyalty of its citizens?

A retired intelligence officer echoes a common view when he calls espionage the "ultimate form of insider trading," the Wall Street crime of using privileged information for personal gain. "I suppose money can be the prime motivator. Especially if you're short on cash and getting desperate."

But the analogy is questionable: The kind of greed that insider trading represents is different in degree from the kind of corruption that leads someone to betray his country. In fact, money or sex might be the introductory offer in the world of spying, but it is the threat of exposure that often keeps nonideological spies in business.

"You'd think those people would know that no matter how much they get — and it's usually pretty pitiful amounts for the risks they're running and the harm they're doing — once they start, the real inducement to keep going is blackmail," the intelligence officer says.

How do spies get caught? "Sometimes they're living so openly beyond their means that they practically beg for discovery. Maybe an investment banker can disguise it if he's getting a few million extra. A civil servant or active duty military has trouble hiding a few thousand if he spends it. Sometimes they start leaving evidence, almost like they just want it all over with. They get caught." If only it were so easy. Edwin P. Wilson, who spied for Libya, lived outrageously well for a retired CIA agent but attracted little suspicion.

Says Michael Mazarr of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, "I suspect that a lot of espionage has always been simply for money. Once you could claim ideology, but these days the reality of the Soviet system is so well-known that nobody can claim they're doing it for the future of the world."

But spies can let themselves be seduced by the argument that we know everything they do and they know everything we do. "I suppose a spy can always minimize in his own mind the damage he's doing, tell himself that the country will make it up in the long run," says Mazarr. He points out also that "some commentators have tried to link it to the Reagan administration, the supposed emphasis on greed. I find it hard to believe that Reaganomics could influence a bunch of Marines in Moscow, but maybe the Me Decade isn't over after all."

Carver says the roots go deeper than the so-called Me Decade, to a time in which right and wrong and strict patriotism were less blurred. "The real problem is that we're feeling, as a country, the corrosive effects of 20 years and more of situational ethics," he says. "We've lost the sense of 'off-limits' — that there are things you simply don't do, principles that aren't subject to analysis by deconstructionists at the Harvard Law School. One of them is that you don't betray your country. And that's not going to be corrected by a few ethics courses at the Harvard Business School."

J. Gregory Dees, professor of management at Yale University's School of Organization and Management, goes further. Dees teaches ethics at one of the few graduate schools granting a master's degree in public and private management, which trains older men and women for positions in both the public and private sectors.

"The problem," he says, "is the loss of the whole idea of public virtue, of individual obligation to things outside yourself and your immediate relationships. It goes much deeper than just blaming it on the Reagan influence. You can't pin it all on current events. And you have to keep in mind that one of the major reasons why people continue doing those things once they've started is the difficulty of getting out. Maybe their initial intentions were to do it just a little, but then they get involved in actions to cover up, and those actions have to be covered up and at some point other people get involved, as accomplices, as witnesses, sometimes as blackmailers. And I suppose there's an additional problem. Bureaucratic institutions create barriers to loyalty. Bureaucracies demand efficiency, not integrity. It's easy to become expedient or see the institution as something to be used."

Have we lost our ethical grounding? Dees says our institutions are concerned that we have. "Corporations and people are starting to recognize that, long term, [expediency] has to hurt. John S.R. Shad [retiring chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission] just gave a lot of money to Harvard Business to start teaching ethics seriously. I know of cases where corporations are getting involved. McDonnell Douglas in St. Louis is sponsoring ethics courses in the public school system. But it's going to take more than a few courses to turn things around."

Among those who have been working to turn things around is an educator with an unlikely background. James B. Stockdale, senior fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution, is a retired Navy vice admiral who spent seven years as a prisoner of war in Vietnam and was awarded the Medal of Honor for his leadership and resistance. His exploits were recently the subject of NBC's docudrama "In Love and War."

"We've been doing something very wrong in this country," says Stockdale, who has written much about maintaining ethical standards under stress. "In business. In the military. We've been trying to run organizations as though they were independent of both their people and their product. We figure if you can manage one activity, you can manage them all. Somehow everything is interchangeable. Everything can be manipulated. We've turned human beings into resources, productive assets, personnel."

We can see the consequences: "A sterile environment that demands no loyalty, that no one can be loyal to. Someone said that a bureaucracy is the only organization designed by man that brings people together to accomplish something in a way that keeps them from developing loyalties to what they're doing or to each other. I have a feeling he was more right than wrong."

SHONE / SIPA PRESS

Marines in Moscow: "Embassy duty tends to become a world of its own."

Symbols will not suffice to solve the problem, he says. "I'm not that comfortable preaching motherhood and apple pie. The real missing element isn't warm feelings. The missing element is a clear sense of right and wrong, and the resolve, the individual and national resolve, to live according to that sense."

Stockdale says that what kept the vast majority of U.S. prisoners of war in Vietnam from the dishonor of collaborating, of making public statements against their nation that could lead to their release, was not just religious faith or patriotism or physical courage — though all were important. Instead, the prisoners developed their own civilization, whose rules were clear and whose safety they valued above their own.

In a recent speech, Stockdale said: "Where were the roots of this kind of resolve? Certainly, the roots were not cerebral, in our heads; the roots were emotional, in our hearts. Power comes from building layer upon layer of convictions that are hard to assail. We can all conceive of universes in which most of the things we would approve of would be just as well served by other choices. But can you conceive of a universe in which it would be worthy of you to be cowardly or wanton?

"I say, let us be aware that resolve and commitment cannot be displaced by throwaway concepts. They are not worthy of us, and because they are not worthy of us, we cannot rely on them."

"He's touching something fundamental," says a philosophy professor. "There's no sense anymore, there hasn't been in philosophy for decades, that patriotism and public virtue aren't the same thing. One's a feeling; if you want it, go watch a parade. Maybe see 'Rambo' a few times. But public virtue, the way the Greeks understood it, means knowing that you're inseparable from your country, that your country's fate is your fate and you're responsible for your country's fate and honor. The Greeks said, 'Character is destiny.' I don't know if that's true for countries as well as individuals. But

it might be worth thinking about."

Doesn't the public fury over the spy cases suggest that things are getting better? Not according to Edward Linenthal, professor of religion at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. "I think the outrage over the spies is really hypocritical. If the whole society runs on self-interest and short-term gains and instant gratification, why should we expect the opposite from people we've put in positions of trust?"

But then, not all positions of trust are equal. Some involve other people's money; others involve their lives. Nearly all observers of contemporary American culture decry what they see as excessive individualism, oriented toward short-term gratification and callously oblivious to long-term damage. Nearly all bemoan the lack of public virtue. But few can find a means of resurrecting a national sense of individual responsibility: that each citizen feels his actions, his attitudes and his loyalty are vital to the nation's survival.

"It was one of the biggest shocks of my life," says Alexios Antypas, a recent graduate of Georgetown University who grew up in the United States and holds dual U.S.-Greek citizenship. "There really are some bad people out there. And they don't wish us well. It took me a while to realize it. I tend to be pretty willing to see the other guy's point of view. But some people just plain hate our guts.

"They never teach you that in school. The enemy is always the bomb, or bad communication, or ugly thoughts, or poverty, or original sin or something like that. They never tell you that the world is full of people who would just as soon kill an American as say 'good morning.' What the hell kind of education is it that won't let you know you've got enemies?"

Or perhaps the real problem is, as former Prime Minister Menachem Begin of Israel once put it, the failure to teach that "our desire to live and their desire to kill us is not a difference of opinion."

— *Philip Gold*